

A N
E N Q U I R Y
I N T O

The Doctrine of the Trinity,

The Mission and Sacrifice of Jesus Christ,

The Pre-Existence of Souls,

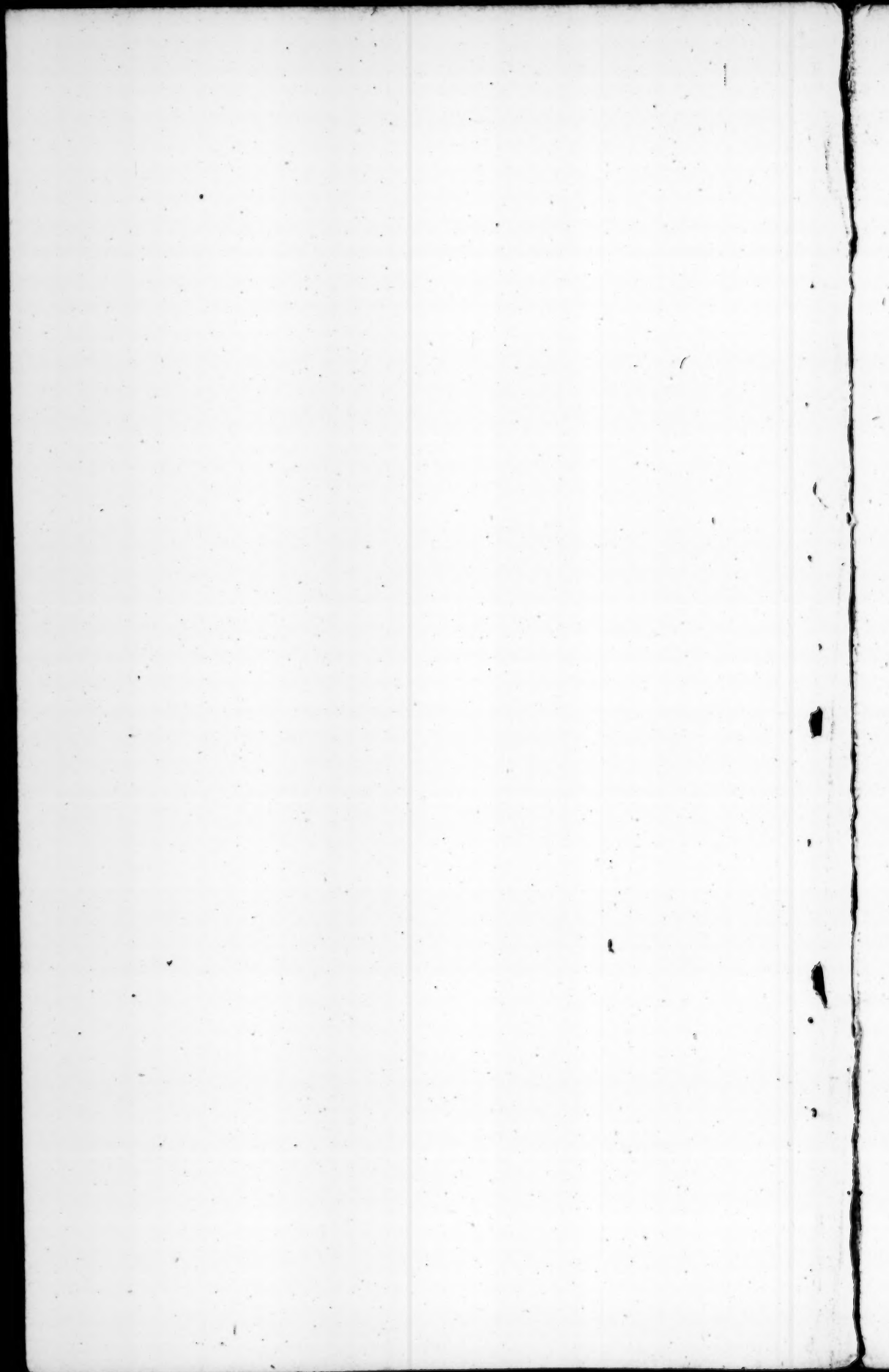
And the Resurrection of the Body.



L O N D O N :

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A N

ENQUIRY, &c.

THE Doctrine of Satisfaction, by the Suffering of Jesus Christ, and the true Intention of his Coming into the World, has long been controverted, and still is variously understood. The not sufficiently attending to the Scripture Account itself, but running away with the Interpretations of Creed-makers, may in this, as well as in many other Points, have been the principal Occasion. Divested of all Prejudice, I shall enquire into, and endeavour to set the Doctrine in a clear Light: The numerous Texts of Scripture analogous hereto, I shall not trouble the Reader with, but leave him to consult and compare them one with another, and with what I shall say; only it may be necessary just to point out at least what our Saviour himself says on that Head, which is to the following Effect:—*From that Time forth began Jesus to shew unto his Disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many Things of the Elders, and Chief Priests, and Scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third Day.—But I say unto you, that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed;* **LIKEWISE shall also the**
B **Son**

*Son of Man suffer of them.——And he said unto them, these are the Words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all Things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning me: Then opened he their Understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third Day; and that Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preached in his Name among all Nations, beginning at Jerusalem: And Stephen, in his excellent Oration to the Jews, tells them, — They were stiff-necked and uncircumcised in Heart and Ears, always resisting the Holy Ghost: As your Fathers did, says he, so do ye: Which of the Prophets have not your Fathers persecuted? And they have slain them which shewed before of the Coming of the just one, of whom ye have been now the Betrayers and Murderers.**

There are two Things to be considered: 1st, How far, or in what Sense it was necessary that Jesus Christ should be crucified, as one Condition or Circumstance towards completing the Work of Redemption; and 2^{dly}, In what Manner the Merit of this Suffering is imputed to Men. But previous to this, let us take a short Survey of the Doctrine of the Trinity, upon which, 'tis apprehended, the Doctrine of Plenary Satisfaction is built.

* See Matt. xvi. 21. Luke xxiv. Acts vii. 51, &c.

The Scripture Account of this too, upon the whole, is sufficiently plain and intelligible; but that of Creed-makers, of later Date, is far from being so. The Creed of St. *Athanasius*, which every Clergyman is bound to believe, or at least to defend, tells us, upon the Peril of Damnation, “ That we must worship one
 “ God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, nei-
 “ ther confounding the Persons nor dividing
 “ the Substance; for there is one Person of
 “ the Father, another of the Son, and ano-
 “ ther of the Holy Ghost: But the Godhead
 “ of the Father, of the Son, and of the
 “ Holy Ghost is all one.—The Father is God,
 “ the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God;
 “ and yet there are not three Gods, but one
 “ God.—As we are compelled by the Chri-
 “ stian Verity to acknowledge *every Person by*
 “ *himself* to be God and Lord, so we are
 “ forbidden by the Catholick Religion to say
 “ there be three Gods or three Lords:” With
 more to the same purpose. They who treat
 all Mystery in Religion as wild and romantic
 are extremely out of the way, and must be in
 a great Degree ignorant what Religion is; it
 is full of Mystery, and Mysteries of such a
 sublime Nature, as afford infinite Satisfaction,
 to a Mind sincerely in love with Truth, to
 search into and unfold: The Task is unwea-
 ried, and the Pleasure inexhaustible: But tho’
 there most certainly are Mysteries in the Chri-
 stian Religion, there are no *Contradictions* in it;
 nothing which is *not true*. In order then to

determine the Question before us, it will be necessary to understand the Terms made use of in the Proposition, at least so far as to have some certain Ideas in our own Minds of something that is expressed or implied by the Words. The Monosyllable ONE, I presume, will, as to its literal, philosophic Sense, admit of no Dispute: We are so far agreed then with *Athanasius* and his Disciples, that there is but *one* God; let us see how far we can keep them company.—He tells us, “ We must worship “ this one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity.” But why must we do it? If the Imposition hath, as sure it has, no Foundation in Scripture or Reason; can neither be reconciled to our natural Notions of God, nor to common Sense: To worship one in three, is acknowledging one to be three; and again, to worship three in one, is to say that the Number three is the same as the Number one, and that one and three are equal; all which is express Contradiction: For it must be carefully considered here, that it is impossible, absolutely so, for any two Propositions to contradict one another, and yet both be true, let the Subject itself be ever so abstruse or sublime; it is the same in that Case as if it were any thing the most common or simple. Propositions are not all alike easily understood: Till they are understood, nothing can be predicated concerning them; and when they are understood, it must be that they are either true or false: Opposition and Agreement can never be the same.

If

If three and one are not equal, or the same, in any one Case, neither can they in any other possible Case: The Idea of one and the Idea of three being once fixed and determined in my Mind to be what they are, and not to be the same Ideas; they cannot be confounded, or made to imply the same Thing, by the Application of any new Object, without ceasing to be what they were before, *viz.* the Ideas of one and of three.

We are next to settle the Notion of Person, or what Idea is express'd or convey'd by the Term, in the common or proper Acceptation of it. In order to which there must be some Definition; and a better perhaps will not readily be found, than what I am about to produce.—“ To find wherein Personal Identity
 “ consists, we must consider what Person
 “ stands for; which, I think, is a Thinking
 “ Intelligent Being, that has Reason and Re-
 “ flection, and can consider itself as itself, the
 “ same thinking Thing in different Times and
 “ Places; which it does only by that Consci-
 “ ousness which is inseparable from Thinking,
 “ and, as it seems to me, essential to it.—For
 “ since Consciousness always accompanies
 “ Thinking, and 'tis that which makes every
 “ one to be what he calls Self, and thereby
 “ distinguishes himself from all other think-
 “ ing Things: In this alone consists Personal
 “ Identity.”*——“ And here lies the true Idea
 “ of a Person, which arises from the Manner

* *Locke's Works*, Vol. I. P. 146. S. 9.

“ of Subsistence, which is in one Individual,
 “ and is not communicable to another.—A
 “ Person relates to something which doth di-
 “ stinguish it from another intelligent Sub-
 “ stance in the same Nature; and therefore
 “ the Foundation of it lies in the peculiar
 “ Manner of Subsistence, which agrees to
 “ one, and to none else of the Kind; and
 “ this is it which is called Personality.”*

These Definitions are not exactly alike; but either of them will serve our Purpose; for, Person, taken in the Sense of either of these great Masters of Language and of Reasoning, if it can at all be applied to the Divine Being, can with no Truth or Propriety be applied to him but as *one*: For, to say that there are three Persons in the Trinity, in the above Sense of Person, were to say that there are in the Trinity three thinking intelligent Beings, *each* considering himself as himself, the same thinking Thing; whose Consciousness, which always accompanies Thinking, makes *him* to be what is called Self, and thereby distinguishes *him* from all other thinking Things: Or thus, to say that there are three Persons in the Trinity, is the same Thing as to say there are three *Individuals* in the Trinity, which arises from the Manner of Subsistence which is in each *Individual*, and is not communicable to any of the *other*.—*Each* Person in the Trinity relates to something which doth distinguish it from *another* intelligent Substance in the Trinity.—

* Bp. of Worcester's Answer to Locke.

All this, which follows from *Athanasius's* Theology, is such Philosophy as I think impossible to be understood, how much soever it may be the Interest of a certain venerable Tribe of Gentlemen to espouse. I desire one Thing may be noted, that if the above Definitions of Person are objected to, whoever does so, may give us a better, or at least shew us wherein these are defective: And I take this Opportunity of declaring, that in all the frequent Conversations I have had with Trinitarians, wherein I have often urged them to explain their Idea of Person, or of three Persons in one God, I never could find that any of them had any clear or distinct Idea of it, but only at last resolved it into a Mystery, transmitted them from their Ancestors, or taught them by their Priests: And I think it must appear to every unbiass'd Mind, that in these Articles of Faith, instead of —“ their neither
 “ confounding the Persons, nor dividing the
 “ Substance,”—that they actually do confound, and in Imagination create a Plurality of Persons; and that if one Part of the Proposition were supposed to be true, that there were a Plurality of Persons, for that very Reason, the latter Part could not be true, but there must be dividing the Substance. If —“ we are
 “ compelled by the Christian Verity to ac-
 “ knowledge every Person *by himself* to be
 “ God and Lord,”—then in the foregoing Sense of Person, or any rational Sense that I ever yet heard of, we are compelled to ac-
 knowledge

knowledge there are three Gods and three Lords. And I presume I shall be safe in asserting, that by the same Rule we prove either of these Propositions, *viz.* That there are three Persons in one God, or in one Nature; or that there are actually three Gods; we might as easily prove that there are three and twenty Persons or three and twenty Gods; in either Case, when you once give up the real Unity, there is no Foundation of sound Reasoning, that I am acquainted with, to limit the Number; And where does this Doctrine lead us to, but back to the Poly-Theism of the Pagans, out of which Christianity brought us? Such are the Consequences of going from the simple Doctrines of the Bible, and admitting the Substitutions of Creeds and Systems, contrived by ignorant or by designing Men.

The Reverend *Ebenezer Erskine*, a famous Scotch Presbyterian Preacher, makes this remarkable Observation upon the Question put by our Saviour to the Pharisees: 'Whose Son is Christ?' "The Pharisees, says he, "thought Christ was the Son of *David*; "but, like the damnably deluded Doctors of "our Day, they did not think so honourably "of him, as to own his being the supreme "God, equal with the Father."—How damnably deluded the *Arian* Doctors of our Day are, or how much Damning is an additional Ornament to the Oratory of the Pulpit, the Reader may judge: I shall only make this Remark upon it, that, from the Principle of
Election

Election and Reprobation, whereby the far-
greatest Part of Mankind are, under an absolute
Decree, doom'd to eternal Destruction, it
becomes more the Province of some Men to
damn than to bless: But passing over these
damning Doctrines, it is very extraordinary
that a Man should see the same Thing double
and single in the same Glance: They must al-
low Jesus Christ to be the supreme God, and
yet him and the Father are equal: By the same
Rule they must allow the Father to be the
supreme God, and yet him and the Son are
equal; so that here are two Equals and two
Supremes, which for all that are but one.
Excellent Reasoning to be sure: The Misfor-
tune is, 'tis too refined to be understood!

Rejecting then the foregoing Account of
this Matter, let us try if we can find one that
is more rational and consistent. The first
Part of the first of the thirty-nine Articles
says, " there is *but one* living and true God,
" everlasting, without Body, Parts or Passions;
" of infinite Power, Wisdom and Goodness."
And the great Doctor *Clark* has demonstrated,
that *this Being is infinite, and that his Infinity*
must be an Infinity of Fullness as well as Im-
mensity; that is, it must not only be without Li-
mits, but also without DIVERSITY, Defect,
or Interruption: That the Unity of God is a
true and real, not a figurative Unity; which
will admit of no Diversity or Distinction of
Persons. If we thus conceive of God the
Father, the Beginning and Cause of all Things,
C what

what are we to understand of the Son? Truly every thing that the New Testament exhibits concerning him; for having once settled in our Minds this first, great, and necessary Truth, an Idea of the eternal and all perfect Being, and considering what we ourselves are, compared to him, if any such Comparison, as a finite to an infinite, can be made, and being sensible of the amazing Distance, in point of Perfection, we stand in to that tremendous Being; and that there may be an almost infinite Gradation of Beings above us, advancing in Perfection gradually one above another: There is nothing forced or unnatural in supposing that, that holy human Soul, which in God's appointed Time took upon it a Body of Flesh, was so far in Perfection above *Adam* or any of his Posterity, and besides possess'd so much a greater Share of the Indwelling of the Divine Life and Nature than any other Creature; that, compared to us, he might, with a very agreeable Figure of Speech be called God. This Reasoning or Interpretation is justified by several of the sacred Writers, and by Christ himself: As where it is said, *The Sons of God saw the Daughters of Men, &c.** which can only be meant to point out or distinguish the Righteous from the Wicked. *That Adam was the Son of God.† I have said ye are Gods; and all of you are Children of the Most High.||* Upon which last Passage our Saviour makes this Remark to the *Jews* — *Is it*

* Gen. vi. 2. † Luke iii. 38. || Psalm lxxxii. 6.

*not written, says he, in your Law, I said ye are Gods? If he called them Gods unto whom the Word of God came: And the Scripture cannot be broken: Say ye of him, whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the World, thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?**

In that excellent and Divine Address of Jesus Christ to his Father, he has these remarkable Words — *And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the Glory which I had with thee before the World was:* And again, *For thou lovedst me before the Foundation of the World.*† I know not whether this Declaration will be, by any, made an Objection to what is above advanced concerning the human Soul of our Saviour; but lest it should, it may not be amiss a little to observe,—that the Doctrine of the Pre-existence of Souls does not carry any apparent Contradiction in it; nor is there, I humbly conceive, any Criterion whereby we can determine the exact Point of Time wherein the Soul either begins to exist, or to think; whether before, at, or after, the Formation of the Embrio in the Womb: If the Soul is capable of a sensible Existence after its Separation from the Body, and actually has one, why may it not have one before its Union with the Body? They who will deny that the Soul is capable of a sensible Existence, or Happiness and Misery, when separated from the Body, in effect say much the same Thing as those who assert,

* John x. 34, &c.

† Ibid. xvii. 5, 24.

that what is called the Soul is only an Affection or Power of Body, or Matter under a certain Modification; either of which, in my Apprehension, leaves the Doctrine of a Future State upon the most ticklish, uncertain Bottom. What becomes of the Soul during an Interval of several Hundred, or to some of several Thousand Years, from the Time of Death to that of the Resurrection (admitting the Truth of that Opinion, that at the End of the World the Bodies of the whole Race of Mankind will arise, and be again vitally united to their Souls, and thenceforth be fixed to all Eternity in their assigned State of Happiness or Misery) may be worth considering, and well become the Sticklers for that Doctrine to assign.

Indeed this Notion of the Resurrection of the same Body is so unphilosophical, has so little Colour of Authority from Scripture, that it would seem strange it ever should have been introduced, or at least continued to this Day, as an Article of Faith: Had we not abundant Experience that Tradition and ecclesiastical Authority is sufficient to give Sanction to any Sort of Errors, this of the Resurrection of the same Body appears to me to be a mere Blunder of the Priests, as in truth they generally deal in little else, but when they deal in something worse than Blunders. The Opinion itself has long since been refuted by one of the most sagacious Authors that ever wrote,*

* *Locke against the Bishop of Worcester.*

It may just be noted here, that the obvious Meaning of our Saviour, and of the New Testament Writers, concerning the Resurrection, is, under that Term, to inculcate the Doctrine of a Future State. A Doctrine about which Mankind were fell into great Doubtfulness and Uncertainty; and it was one great Part of the Business of the Gospel Light to revive and establish that great important Truth, that the sensible Existence of a Man did not expire with the Dissolution of his Body; but that there really was a Future State, wherein all Mankind would receive an exact Retribution, according to their Behaviour in this State of Probation; and all the seeming Inequalities or Hardships to which good Men have been exposed, be finally adjusted, and abundantly compensated. I know it is objected to this, that *the literal Signification of the Word is to rise again; and therefore, say they, it must respect the Body which was laid in the Grave.* But in my Apprehension, the Objection carries no Weight in it; for, in the first Place, the Objectors must satisfy us, upon their Principles, what becomes of the Soul from the Time of Death to that of the general Judgment: If they say, what is strongly implied by some of them, that it sleeps all that Time in the Grave, then Rising again may as properly be applied to the Soul as to the Body; but next it may very significantly be understood to regard the Soul in another Sense: The Soul, it is allowed, is not eternal, but created,
and

and at some Period of Time began to exist; at the Time that its Existence commenced, then did it arise into Being; and when the present Mode of its Existence, wherein it is joined to a Body of Flesh, terminates, or when it is separated from the Body, it is removed, or *arises* into another; and let us suppose a higher or more perfect Mode of Existence, to a State that will never after undergo any Change; here is *Arising again, or a Resurrection of the Soul only*: So that the bare Signification of the Term argues nothing in favour of the Body's Rising.

'Tis presumed that few, if any, at this Time of Day, will deny that God himself is a pure Spirit, free from any Dependence upon, or Union with Matter; and it were denying him to be what he is, not to admit that he is in himself, beyond all Comparison, the most intelligent, as well as happy Being.

If then the Almighty has created the Souls of Men pure intelligent Spirits, upon what Principle can it be disproved, that he has made them capable of existing, and enjoying as great or a greater Degree of Happiness, when separated from, than when joined to Body. To urge such a necessary Dependence of the Soul upon Matter, certainly borders upon a Doctrine already hinted at; but beside, to allow that the Soul is a pure Spirit, essentially different from Matter, and then to say, an Union with Matter is necessary to its Existence, is an express Contradiction, the Essence of the Soul and of Matter not being the same: The Existence

istence of the Soul can no more be affected by a Separation from Matter, than the Existence of Matter can be affected by the Absence of Soul; or in other Words, the Existence of a created immaterial Soul can no more depend upon its Union with any Portion of Matter, than the Existence of any Portion of Matter can depend upon its Union with a created immaterial Soul: And with respect to the different Modes of Existence, which the Soul is, or may be, made capable of; it is true, the All-wise God has seen meet, for Reasons best known to himself, to bring Men upon the Stage of this World with Soul and Body united, and to continue them so but *a very short* time, before the Body is resolved into primitive Dust, and the Soul returns to him who gave it;* but our scanty Knowledge of what is only for the present, proves nothing what will or will not be hereafter: The nearer we can in any or in all Respects resemble our Creator, the more happy we shall certainly be; but we should, as to the Manner of our Existence, resemble him more in a State separate from Body, than joined to it; which among many others is, with me, an Argument against the Resurrection of the same Body.

Oh! but, say the Votaries for the Resurrection of the Body, *tho' the same Body is raised which was laid in the Grave, yet upon being reunited to the Soul* (or when the Soul awakes, for upon the sleeping Hypothesis it don't appear

* Ecc. xii. 7.

they

they were ever separated) *it is essentially changed, and out of an earthly corruptible is made a spiritual incorruptible Body.* It must be granted, that some Expressions of the Apostle *Paul*, taken literally, are in favour of this Plea; but for my part, I don't see how we can take them literally, but only figuratively, without a Contradiction; because, as has already been observed, Matter and Spirit being essentially different, no Change in any of the Properties of Matter will change its Essence; it will be Matter still: so that there is no Way to get rid of this earthly Body, but by annihilating it, and creating a spiritual Body in its Room; and in that Case, the spiritual Body, with which the Soul is clothed, will not be the same that was raised: for after the earthly Body is annihilated, it cannot be considered as the Subject upon which the Almighty works, in the creating this spiritual Body: Consequently neither the raising the Body out of the Grave, or the annihilating it after it is raised, can be of any Use.

I hope the Reader will pardon the Length of this Digression; and let us now return to the Subject immediately under Consideration.

Tho' we know nothing of our own Souls having had any Pre-existence to their Union with these Bodies, we may nevertheless rationally conclude, concerning that holy human Soul of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, in the Father's appointed Time, took a Body of Flesh, that it really pre-existed, from an almost infinite Number of Ages; and as to Duration, the

the Infinity of which is one of the Attributes of the Deity (comparing that of the human Soul of Christ with our own, which is but of Yesterday) we may predicate the same of him in that respect, as we do of the Perfection of his Nature; that is, consider him as from everlasting, the Son of God by ineffable Generation. But tho' every Thing that is created, every Thing but God himself, at some Time began to be; if there was a human Soul in the Man Christ Jesus, the Existence thereof must have a Commencement in Time; yet that divine Spirit, to which he was so intimately and inseparably united, and which in so large and full a Manner dwelt in him, as the beloved and only begotten Son of God; this was truly an ineffable Emanation of the Godhead, and in very deed eternal.

As to the Holy Ghost or Spirit, we need not spend one Moment in settling what that is, being evidently no other than the same Divine Spirit, in another Manifestation. Our Saviour himself has sufficiently informed us of this Matter: *I will, says he, pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of Truth, whom the World cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.**

* What our Saviour foretold concerning the Reception and Treatment, this Gift of God, the Spirit of his Son, would meet with in the World, has been amply fulfilled. In a Pamphlet published the other Day, in favour of some modern Systems against modern Infidelity, and primitive Ch—ty, it is lampoon'd, under the Character of the Quakers Light, in the exact Language, and in the same Reasoning which our Saviour said it would be: *It is, says the Author, a Principle to be neither seen, heard, felt, or understood.*

D

But

*But ye know him, because he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.** That, by another Comforter, is meant the Holy Spirit which was in Jesus Christ, in another Administration, is manifest, because in the same Sentence he tells them, he that was with them should be in them.

Let us now enquire into the Motive and End proposed by God Almighty, in sending his Son into the World. Our Saviour himself tells us expressly, that *God so loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life.†* Our Saviour, then, came not of himself, but his Father sent him, and the Motive was Love to the World, contrary to what some Men teach: It may therefore be convenient, before we explain this Point of Doctrine, to remove a little of the Rubbish which has been thrown upon it.

Mr. Erskine asserts, *The Question is not, what we think of God absolutely considered; for, says he, God out of Christ is a consuming Fire.‡* In which few Expressions, there seems to be contained a great deal of Error: For first, by *God absolutely considered*, must be meant (if it means any thing) *what he is in himself, in his own Nature, without Relation to any other Being.* In which Sense, it is demonstrable he is immutable; nor, by the same Rule, can he himself undergo any real Change, when considered in Relation to any other Being;

* John xiv. 16, 17. † John iii. 16. ‡ Sermon. p. 7.

all the apparant Change, if any there be, is only in the Relation of those Beings.

Secondly, God out of Christ, can be no other than what he is in Christ; it were strange Doctrine to suppose any Perfection in Christ, which is not in God, and yet to say that God is an All-perfect Being. I agree with what this Author says, tho' not with what he means, that God out of Christ (supposing he could be out of him) is a consuming Fire; but then he is just the same in Christ: Considered either way, he is a consuming Fire against Sin, and against that only. This Doctrine, that God is in himself severe, unmerciful, implacable, capricious, has no sufficient Foundation in Scripture, and is inconsistent with our natural Notions of his Moral Attributes. Besides, if he is of such a Temper, as not to forgive or to be reconciled to Men upon their Repentance and Humiliation, the most sincere and unfeigned, without another who was innocent take the Guilt and suffer the Punishment due to Mens Sins, to placate the Divine Vengeance; I don't see upon this Principle, when that is done, how we are secure that the Atonement is accepted. To say, that *this is rested upon the Authority of a Divine Revelation*; besides its being a begging the Question, if it were granted, it does not remove the Doubt; for if once God is considered merely as an arbitrary Being, we can never, upon any Principle whatever, be sure in any case that he will not change his Mind, and alter his Conduct. At this Rate, he might

be considered this Day as promising to receive me into Favour upon myself making Satisfaction for a past Offence, and declining it To-morrow ; by the same Rule, he might To-morrow promise to pardon me upon the Intercession of another, and repent of that the next Day ; but this cannot be true of the Judge of all the World.

Thirdly, What can this Gentleman mean ? or where is the Sense of *considering God absolutely and out of Christ* ? one Thing cannot be out of another, but it must be distinct from it. Now if God can be properly considered absolutely out of Christ, or if we can have the true Idea of that Being which we call God, and exclude Christ out of that Idea ; how is the Unity of the Godhead preserved ? If he should tell us that by *God out of Christ* he means, that in our Manner of considering God, as a Being infinite in Power, Wisdom, and Justice ; if we suspend in our Minds the taking in those other Attributes of Love and Mercy ; he may, in that Point of View, be considered as a consuming Fire : But when those other Attributes are taken in, the Character is changed, or our Idea enlarged. Thus far I should agree with him ; but then if this be his Comment, his Text is Nonsense, because it confounds Attributes with Subjects, and makes one Thing stand for another ; besides, I don't see how this would agree with his Notion of the Trinity.

I never in my Life was much conversant
with

with Authors of this Cast, but having accidentally light on one of them, I will follow him a little farther.

“ It is true, says he, the natural Consciences
 “ of Men, and their Thoughts, may accuse or
 “ excuse, and so condemn or justify them, according as they do good or evil, *Rom. ii. 15.*
 “ And to be thus condemned or justify’d, is no
 “ Evidence of the Man’s State before God, for
 “ this only shews the Work of the Law writ
 “ in our Hearts by Nature, even the Covenant of Works, which says, that the Doer of
 “ the Law shall be justified, and the Breakers
 “ of the Law shall be condemned. These
 “ are some of the Beams of Nature’s Light.
 “ All Men may find themselves condemned
 “ here; and they that think themselves justified
 “ here before God by their good Deeds, they
 “ discover their Ignorance of the Law, which
 “ condemns all vain and evil Thoughts, as
 “ well as evil Deeds; and therefore no Man
 “ can have his Heart and Thoughts justified
 “ before God, nor a good Conscience nor Confidence towards God, till once he come to
 “ think duly of Christ, from whom the Law
 “ hath got full Satisfaction to all its Commands
 “ and Demands, and by whose Blood the fiery
 “ Law is extinguished.” *

I have made the Quotation more large, that the Reader may see the Scope of the Doctrine contained in it. A strange Mixture indeed, that a rational Creature, endowed with a Con-

* *Serm. p. 14 and 15.*

science,

science, with a Sense of the Difference between Good and Evil, that has a Law placed in his Conscience by God himself; which condemns him when he does evil, and justifies him when he does well; that this should afford no Evidence of a Man's State before God! Strange that the Law of the God of Nature, written in our Hearts, should justify us, and God himself not justify us! *If the Law which was written in Mens Hearts condemn all vain and evil Thoughts, as well as evil Deeds,* it must allow sufficient Strength to decline one as well as the other, or else it were an unreasonable Law; and therefore his instancing that, is to no Purpose. The Reason given in support of his Opinion, if it prove any Thing, in my Apprehension, proves just the Contrary.—He says, *This only shews the Work of the Law writ in our Hearts by Nature—the Covenant of Works, which says, that the Doer of the Law shall be justified, and the Breaker of the Law condemned.* Now pray, who were the Parties to this Covenant? God on one Part I suppose, and Man on the other; and yet this Covenant is of such a Nature, that it is impossible for a Man to fulfill it; or if he does, that will not justify him before God. This Doctrine then, when we come to the Bottom of it, seems to be, either that God had entered into a Covenant with Men, without any Design of performing his Part of it, or else that he had imposed such Conditions upon them, as it was impossible they should perform; which exhibits

bits the most unworthy Notions of the Deity. In short, these Gentlemen are sworn Enemies to good Works; they claim Heaven upon other Terms, and what these Terms are, we are now told.—They are *to think duly of Christ, from whom the Law hath got full Satisfaction to all its Commands and Demands—And by whose Blood the fiery Law is extinguished*: That is, in other Words, God had imposed, in a most arbitrary and unreasonable Manner, such Laws and Rules, as it were impossible for us constantly and in all Things to comply with. We frequently violated those Divine Injunctions, both wherein we could, and wherein we could not help it. God would not accept us either in our Obedience or Disobedience; we were put at an irreconcilable Distance from him, everlasting Happiness was forfeited, and had it not been for Jesus Christ, who interposed betwixt this implacable Being and us, we should have perished everlastingly; but he offering himself freely, as a Sacrifice to appease the Divine Wrath, that Man might be reconciled to his Maker, this was accepted, the Restitution compleated, with this Advantage annexed, that good Works or a Conformity to any Law of Conscience, with respect to the moral Rectitude or Obliquity of Actions, being henceforth out of the Question, and Acceptance rested singly upon Faith, or the bare believing in this Atonement, Men are at liberty to take a full Scope, in gratifying their Passions and sensual Appetites in the most inordinate

Bent,

Bent, without any Hazard of Salvation. If all this don't follow from the Principles I am opposing, I desire the Contrary may be demonstrated, and I will retract.* In the mean Time, let me ask them a serious Question, and that is, whether the *fiery Law having got full Satisfaction to all its Demands*——and its being *extinguished*, is to be understood in respect to all Mankind, or only a Part of them? If they will be open and ingenuous in their Answer, it may be of great Service towards settling the Controversy.

The Gentleman we have been animadverting upon, in one Place insinuates, that *neither the Thoughts, Words, nor Actions of Men are free*; and gives a strange Reason for it, *because God knows them*; and yet tho' he supposes *all these necessary*, he will have *God to be taking Cognizance of them, and dealing with Men accordingly*.† How consistent this is with itself, or with what he says elsewhere, we shall leave to the Reader's Judgment, and proceed to the Enquiry before us.

* Page 39, in the Book above quoted, we are told in almost so many express Words, that Justification is by the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness only; that it is imputed at the very Time when we are in a State of personal Wickedness.—That our own Consciences condemning us of Sin, is so far from being an Argument, whilst under such Condemnation, against our deriving any Advantage from this Merit, that it is an Argument for it.——Page 98, he speaks out plainly, and tells us that the Terms of the Gospel is a Manifestation of free sovereign Grace, which is neither hindered by our Evil, nor furthered by our Good.

† Serm. p. 13.

God

God being Love, and that being the Reason or Motive of sending his Son into the World; and the End proposed in sending him being, that *whosoever* believed in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life; it should be considered in what Sense Jesus Christ becomes an Object of Faith.

In the Beginning, Man was made Upright, came forth a perfect Creature, out of the Hands of a perfect Creator; had Communion with his Maker, in which, and in a Conformity to the Divine Law, he was Happy. This Law he received from God himself; he was taught it by the Word of God, speaking in his own Understanding; this Voice he knew, even after his Transgression. If Man had not been created Rational and Free, he had been no proper Subject of any moral Law, nor of Reward or Punishment, for the Observance or Non-observance thereof; but he was a proper Subject of such a Law, and such a Law was given him: In this he differed from, and was above every Creature, upon the Face of this Globe *at least*; they were limited by the Laws of Sense, but Man was moreover endowed with Divine Reason; God himself was his Schoolmaster, his Father, and his Friend: Happy had it been for our first Parents and all their Posterity, if they had never broke those Divine Laws, nor separated themselves from that Heavenly Communion; they would have been happy for ever, and that Happiness might have increased; for tho' the mere Absence of Pain is a Kind of Happiness

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ness or Pleasure, yet, there being something real and positive in Happiness, it must admit of Degrees, and those Degrees may ascend or increase in an infinite Gradation, without ever reaching the Happiness of the *All-perfect Being*. There is a Perfection belongs to this Being, and to him only, he cannot Sin, he cannot Fall; this we can say of him, and of him only. But as in the Notion of a created, intelligent, free Being, both a Power to Fall, and a Power to Stand, is imply'd; if such an one fall, it is an Act of Choice, not of Necessity, not the Act of another, but his own; and all the bad Consequences thereof, of right should go to the Account of the Actor.

This must have been the Case with our first Parents, and with all their Posterity; for, it is impossible that God should have given them a Law, and at the same Time laid them under a Physical Necessity to break it; because it is impossible that God should contradict himself, but this were to contradict himself. Nor is it possible that he should so much as *will* the breaking of any Law that he himself had given, at least untill the same Authority which instituted the Law had abrogated it; because the Breach of the Law would be Evil, and God cannot will Evil. It is impossible that God could be under any Necessity, either to *pre-ordain* or to *will* the Fall of Man, for the bringing about any Scheme, either for the Advancement of his own Glory, or furthering the Happiness of his Creatures; because this would argue a Defect

fect of Power, or of Contrivance, which cannot be supposed of God. It is impossible that he should enjoin Laws or Rules, and annex Punishment to the Non-observance of them, without investing the Subjects of those Laws with full Power for a practical Compliance; because that would militate against the Justice and Goodness of God. There really can be no such Thing, Practically, or in Fact, but in Speculation only, as Virtue and Vice, Right and Wrong, upon any other Principle than that of Liberty or Power to act or not to act. If the Actions of a Man are not free, or if the Volitions or Reasonings of his *Mind* are no way concerned, and have no Correspondence with the Actions of his Body, then he is not an Agent, but a Patient, or Machine; and, with respect to him, they cannot be properly denominated either morally good or evil, which is in the highest Degree absurd.* Since God then is a Being of infinite Perfection, and his Conduct, in the whole Œconomy of the intellectual World, reasonable and just; and Man being an accountable Creature, capable of preserving or abusing his Liberty; it follows, that,

This was the Case with the first Parents of Mankind; they fell off from their Allegiance

* The Actions of shooting off a Man's Arm and shooting off a Fox's Tail, are in themselves similar, and no more evil in one than the other, if all our Acts arise only from a mere mechanical Impulse; but I fancy the strongest Necessitarian would scarce allow me equally innocent in either Case, if himself should lose a Limb, by my seeming designedly (but according to their Doctrine, from a Principle of Necessity) to point my Piece at him.

to him that made them, transgressed his Commands, and lost his Favour; and this too, so far as we know, has been more or less the Case with all their Posterity, descended from them in the ordinary Course of Generation: And in Process of Time the Defection became not only so general, but so great, that the true Knowledge of the Living God, or even so much as a rational Belief concerning him, the Nature and Obligation of Moral Virtue, the Relation that Mankind stood in to their *Maker*, the mutual Tyes and Interests of social Society, and the final Consequences of treading in the Paths of Virtue or Impurity, in the Retributions of a Future State; all these were corrupted, obscured, and almost lost. Even in so early Time of the World as the Days of *Noah*, it is expressly declared in Holy Writ, that *every Imagination of the Heart of Man was only evil continually*—that *God looked upon the Earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all Flesh had corrupted his Way*. Nevertheless, it pleased a long-suffering and merciful God, at divers Times, and in different Parts of the World, to cause Light to break forth in the midst of this Darkness: He never left himself without a Witness; but the Lapse was too great, and too general, to be effectually recovered by any Dispensation that took place before the Coming of Jesus Christ. He came into the World, according to his own Declaration, *to be a Witness, to bear witness to the Truth*: He did the Works which no Man else could do, and preached such Doctrines

trines as no Man ever had heard ; he restored and established the Belief of the One True God, and convinced the World what that God was ; he established that only Worship which was acceptable to him, or profitable to Men ; he exhibited, in a perfect Plan, those Rules of moral Rectitude, whereby the Conduct of Men should be governed, and their future Happiness secured ; he took the Veil from off their Hearts, and opened a Door into Life and Immortality : In short, he restored, or put Mankind in a Capacity to recover, every thing they had lost, either by *Adam's* Transgression or their own. The Light and Truth, which he brought into the World, spread its Rays like a *Meridian Sun* ; all the Powers of Darkness never could, nor never can extinguish it.

Notwithstanding this stupendous Favour, this amazing Act of Love in God through Jesus Christ ; such was the Wickedness and Ingratitude of Men, such the Hardness of their Hearts, that they rejected so glorious an *Administration*, and crucified the *Minister* of it. This the Almighty knew, and this our Saviour, who knew the Hearts of Men and the Counsels of the Highest, knew, would be the Effect of his Coming ; but such was his Love to Mankind, that he freely gave himself up to the Death of the Cross, that he might open the Way to Life and Salvation : In this Sense then it was truly necessary that Christ should suffer ; but whether in any other, or what further Sense, I shall not undertake to determine : Only,

Thus

Thus far I think the Scriptures, and the Reason of the Thing, will abundantly bear me out, that if we derive any personal Advantage from the Suffering of Christ, it must be conditional. The stated Laws of Nature and Providence, the certain immutable Measure of Right and Wrong, must remain the same. If ever it was the Case, that the Reason, Wisdom, and Justice of God, determined him to treat Men according to their Conduct, and finally to punish the Wicked and make the Virtuous happy; it will, it must, continue to be the Case, so long as *Man* remains upon the Face of the Earth; the Sufferings of Christ can in this Respect make no Alteration. Remission of Sins, we allow, was to be preached in his Name among all Nations, but Repentance was to be preached in the same Extent: Nor is it expressly said how this Remission of Sins was to be made; it may not so much have Respect to any thing Jesus Christ did or suffered without us, as to the internal efficacious Work of his Grace and Divine Spirit in our Consciences, to which our Concurrence and Co-operation must always be understood. It is said, that he purchased Gifts for *Men*: In what manner we are to understand this Purchase being made, I shall not at present enquire; but as to the Benefit arising from it to us, it must depend on our own Application. Besides the blessed Example, and the many excellent Doctrines and Precepts left us by Christ, the Gift of the Holy Spirit (which is spoken of under the Character of

of a Purchase) is none of the least Favours. It is that whereby our Judgments are to be informed, our Wills influenced, our Passions and Lusts rectified and subdued, the Bias of our Minds turned from the Objects and Pleasures of Sense, and fixed upon the Supreme Good; and if we embrace the Offers of this Gift, and become sincerely Co-workers with the Grace of God, and conform to its Dictates, we shall have a sure Title to all the Privileges of the Gospel; but not without these Conditions: A wicked *Man*, who continues in a Course of Wickedness to the last, let his Opinion be never so Orthodox, cannot be saved by his *Faith*.

F I N I S.



